

FINAL DRAFT

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EFFECTIVE PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

(Focus on "Consensus" Groups)

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Preface

The following report was prepared by University scientists through cooperative agreement, project science staff, or contractors as part of the ongoing efforts of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project, co-managed by the U.S. Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management. It was prepared for the express purpose of compiling information, reviewing available literature, researching topics related to ecosystems within the Interior Columbia Basin, or exploring relationships among biophysical and economic/social resources.

This report has been reviewed by agency scientists as part of the ongoing ecosystem project. The report may be cited within the primary products produced by the project or it may have served its purposes by furthering our understanding of complex resource issues within the Basin. This report may become the basis for scientific journal articles or technical reports by the USDA Forest Service or USDI Bureau of Land Management. The attached report has not been through all the steps appropriate to final publishing as either a scientific journal article or a technical report.

A Special Thanks:

We thank the participants for contributing their time and energy to the interviewing process. The cooperation and logistical support we received in setting up and conducting the interviews was excellent. We also thank the participants for their personal dedication in making these groups successful.

The interviews provided many unique insights and perspectives which we hope are captured in this paper. Individuals from the following groups were interviewed:

Bridger-Teton Wilderness Action Planning Groups,
Bridger-Teton National Forest

Guiding the Course Work Group, Umatilla National Forest

Pine/Eagle Consensus Group, Wallowa Whitman National Forest

Trout Creek Mountain Working Group, Vale District, Bureau of Land Management

Thanks Again, and keep up the good work!

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I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The social science team of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) believe effective public participation is essential for successful implementation of ecosystem management. People with a wide variety of interests relating to natural resource management inside and outside of the management agencies are tired of the "gridlock" that engulfs public land management today. Across the country "work groups" (sometimes called "consensus groups") are springing up and working hard, together, to end the gridlock.

The social science team and project management decided that it would be beneficial to gain some insight and understanding of the workings of these groups through direct interaction with members of successful work groups. The research questions and findings follow:

Question 1: Do the participants of working groups (sometimes loosely called "consensus" groups) believe that such groups are an effective way for involved publics and the agencies to move past "gridlock"?

Answer: The participants answered this question with a resounding YES! Here is a typical interviewee response to this question:

"By my standards we had an outstanding success."

Of the 41 people interviewed only 4 expressed serious reservations about the overall utility of these groups. Many social scientists have documented their support of these groups in social science literature. Public participation undertakings of this sort are learnable skills and the payoffs are well worth the investment.

Question 2: What happens when more than one organizational level of government or interest group becomes involved in a work group?

Answer: Participants responded to this question in a variety of ways. An analysis of the interview data resulted in

these generalized interviewee conclusions:

Yes, there were organizational hierarchial influences on their group and they were generally **positive**.

Yes, there were organizational hierarchial influences on their group and they were generally **negative**.

Maybe there were influences, maybe there weren't. What influences existed weren't a big deal.

Each of us representing various organizations had a responsibility to convince our organizations that we weren't "selling out" the organizational position.

As a government employee I felt a certain unspoken pressure to perform. Everybody knew we really wanted to make this work.

The influence of organizational hierarchies were seldom raised in a direct fashion by the interviewees. When they touched on the subject they were asked to consider organizational influences on their project. Many interviewees had to ponder this question, or have the question restated. It didn't seem to be a big thing on their minds. The interviewers also noted a general feeling that the participants favored having local control over their project and many individuals expressed strong feelings that they would do what they thought right regardless of organizational hierarchial pressures.

In short, this research didn't reveal any clear pattern of hierarchial influence unless you could say that the pattern of influence varies by individual perspective and from group to group.

Question 3: What topics and concepts would the interviewees bring up and discuss of their own accord?

Answer: Four social scientists analyzed the interview data independently. They compared their independent analysis of the data and found they had reached nearly identical topical conclusions. Here are the concepts consistently

raised by the interviewees as playing an important role in the success of their groups' undertakings:

1. Feelings and Relationships

2. Process and Structure

3. Education and Learning

4. Commitments

5. Outcomes

We are confident that groups considering similar undertakings could gain a lot by studying and adopting many of the preceding concepts which are explained in the body of this paper. The authors of this paper believe the positive feelings and relationships that developed within each work group to be **THE** most important accomplishment of these groups. The biggest lesson to be learned is for the agencies to carefully consider their statements of commitment and then to actively pursue their commitments until they result in satisfactory outcomes.

Recommendations: We want to clearly express that these groups were successful. They would not have persisted together and accomplished what they did without doing most things right. We do see ways that future groups can improve on their founding efforts.

Here are three important areas to work on:

1. Interpersonal Skills Training and Education

2. Meeting Management

3. Commitments/Outcomes

Each of these topical headings are explained in the body of this paper. Appendix A. includes a complete Research Methods section which describes the scientific procedures used in the development of this paper.

II. BACKGROUND:

A. Purpose of Research:

The social science team of the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project (ICBEMP) believe effective public participation is essential for successful implementation of ecosystem management. The social assessment process used on the ICBEMP project included a section focused on effective public participation. one core idea incorporated into the ICBEMP social science process was borrowed from Kai Lee. This concept emphasizes "mutual learning" through analysis processes that unite the technical aspects of analysis with public input and insights throughout the planning process (Lee, 1989).

People with a wide variety of interests relating to natural resource management inside and outside of the management agencies are tired of the "gridlock" that engulfs the current management of most public lands. Kai Lee points out that "Solutions to problems cannot be commanded. They must be discovered." (Lee, 1989). Across the country "work groups" (sometimes called "consensus groups") are springing up and working hard, together, to end the gridlock by finding workable solutions. The social science team and project management decided that it would be beneficial to gain some understanding of the workings of these groups through direct interactions with them. The groups selected for study have reputations for working together successfully. The **primary research questions** explored were:

Question 1: Do the participants of working groups (sometimes loosely called "consensus" groups) believe that such groups are an effective way for involved publics and the agencies to move past "gridlock"?

Question 2: What happens when more than one organizational level of government or interest group becomes involved in a work group?

The interviews were carefully planned to allow the interviewees to openly and freely discuss topics that were important to them. A description of the techniques and processes used to accomplish this objective are included in Appendix A.

This objective constituted a third research question, which has been phrased as follows:

Question 3: What topics and concepts would the interviewees bring up and discuss of their own accord?

The research was also undertaken to add depth to the existing social science research which emphasizes the importance of effective public participation. Current Social Science literature speaks of "consensus" workgroups as the wave of the future (Wondolleck, 1988). These writings proclaim that such groups have the potential to relieve or forestall the current state "gridlock" that surrounds public land management. This research was designed to either validate or repudiate current environmental sociology literature relative to this topic. It was also hoped that this study might lead to new insights for management and/or science community on this topic.

Direct responses to the research questions are found in the "**FINDINGS**" section of the paper.

B. Research Methods:

This research began with management and the researchers jointly developing the general research questions (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Data gathering was accomplished through 41 personal interviews of "consensus" group participants from 4 different groups in three different states. Interviewing strategies and methodologies were carefully studied before the interviewing process began (Gordon, 1987). Each interview was taped and transcribed verbatim. This resulted in approximately 1400 pages of data (35 x 41). A qualitative analysis methodology called "grounded theory" was employed for interview guidance, data analysis, and development of social theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) and (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). Three social scientists and one management employee independently analyzed the data. A variety of techniques were used in the initial analysis. These techniques included computer key word searches, duplication of each interview and deleting everything but subject matter which addressed the "hierarchy" research question and questions asked of every interviewee to specifically comment on the best and worst project outcomes. These extractions were then independently

analyzed by axial line by line coding (mimeoing). This work was undertaken by the researcher furthest removed from direct contact with any of the participants or the issues and concerns surrounding natural resource management. This work verified and added one conceptual heading to the **Participants Perspective** section of the paper.

Finally, in keeping with grounded theory methodology, the emergent coded data was examined and presented in the form of social theory (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). These working hypotheses provide other social scientists a foundation to test the reliability of these findings and assist in future recommendations to strengthen this aspect of public participation. A more detailed description of research methods is found in Appendix A.

III. THE PARTICIPANTS PERSPECTIVE:

A. Section Overview:

The paper begins with the participants perspective. They are closest to the action and have clear insight as to the pro's and con's of public participation workgroups. We can probably all learn from their insights. The categories of topics that will be presented here emerged consistently and repeatedly amongst the participants of every group. Anselm Strauss's qualitative analysis methodology termed "Grounded Theory" was used to develop and organize this section of the paper.

41 individuals were interviewed from 4 different work groups located in Washington, Oregon and Wyoming. Three of the 4 work groups addressed resource management topics on public lands administered by the Forest Service and 1 group addressed resource management topics related to public lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management. One of these groups was subdivided into 3 distinct smaller working groups. All of the groups had distinct "personalities". However, interviewees from within each group consistently and repeatedly brought up important characteristics and attitudes that contributed to, or detracted from, their efforts.

The interviewees were purposefully selected to encompass the full range of viewpoints and resource management values that existed within each group. Every interviewee was directly asked to respond to the first two primary research questions at some point during their interview. The interviewer also tried to create a conversational flow to the interview and encouraged the interviewees to take the conversation into arenas important to them (Gordon, 1987). Much of the material presented in this section addresses the third research question, which is:

Question 3: What topics and concepts would the participants of these work groups bring up and discuss of their own accord?

The topics that immediately and consistently emerged from the interviews have been categorized into 5 main headings;

1. Feelings and Relationships

2. Process and Structure

3. Education and Learning

4. Commitments

5. Outcomes

Additional description of the interviewing development and execution is found in Appendix A.

While these categories are presented separately for purposes of readability, it is important to emphasize that each of the topical headings encompasses a variety of concepts. Further, each of the headings and sub-topics are closely intertwined, each with the other, in a bewildering array of circumstances and contextual meanings. This presentation is limited to those topics and sub-topics most frequently raised by the interviewees. Little effort will be expended trying to demonstrate the complex interdependent associations of these concepts. The description of the analysis process used to develop the categorical headings used is located in Appendix A.

The presentation format begins with a brief contextual explanation of the meaning of the topical heading or subheading. This is followed by a few selected and typifying interviewee quotations relative to the category. Finally, there will be a brief narrative providing a concise interpretation about the topic by the authors of this paper.

A summary of research findings relative to Question 3 and this section of the paper are located under the **"FINDINGS:"** heading.

B. Primary Emergent Categories:

1. Feelings and Relationships:

Time after time, when the interviewees were asked to discuss the most positive result of their work group, the response was about the trust, understanding and overall personal relationships they developed with the other participants over the course of their work group experience. Many selling processes emphasize the importance of developing trust and a clear understanding of the customer's needs before the selling agent attempts to demonstrate and sell their product. Maybe there is a message in that for everyone (Bumstead, 1995).

Positive "on the ground" outcomes was the response that came in a distant second place as the most positive outcome of the work group efforts. There were many dimensions to the **Feelings and Relationships** heading. Here are some of the "key" thoughts surfaced by the interviewees within this category:

Trust/Distrust:

Typifying Quotations:

"There's a high degree of trust that exists among those folks who have been to meetings together for seven years. How could there not be?"

"Well that's the whole game (pause) it's trust. Trust and being honest and being able to work towards some kind of common goal."

"We've learned to talk to each other, listen to each other, and we're honest with each other."

"When you create that kind of openness, you move the sideboards, the constraints, of thinking."

"One of the biggest trust breakers is the fact that we still haven't implemented the project."

Interviewer: "Could you give me some examples of the

corporate agency and things that have happened that have realized your distrust?"

Interviewee: "What can you talk about that doesn't demonstrate that? (both laugh)"

Nearly every interviewee brought up trust fairly early in the interview. Most of them (not all) spoke of trust within their group in a positive way. It seemed like they had surprised themselves in the degree of trust that developed within their groups. The important point to consider is; *Why were each of these groups successful in developing trust within their membership?* The answer is complex. Kai Lee points out that one aspect may be that "Consensus -building focuses on shared objectives and urges the sharing of information as a sign of trust." (Lee, 1989) . Some other possible reasons are; common vision, agreed to working processes, interpersonal skill foundation of key members within the group, caring for and respecting each others values, a strong commitment to accomplish the task, and a common shared love of the land. Each of these topics will be further discussed in sections which follow.

It is important to point out the last quote in this section. The trust that has been developed is somewhat fragile. All of the players need to live up to their commitments. A watchful and wary concern surrounds this subject. See the section on "**Outcomes:**" for further discussion.

Caring/Understanding:

Typifying Quotations:

"These people were more than just acquaintances, they were personal friends of mine."

"He knew I was uncomfortable. Then he went on to say; *"Thank you for coming today, you didn't have to."* ... And so I thought (emotion filled pause) you know this is important to me. This is more important to me, than who wins or loses. I think we reached a point where we all felt that."

"Now we talk, we visit, and ask about our families and, and we developed a little bit of a friendship."

"And that actually in some ways it sort of had a social benefit more than a wilderness management benefit. You know, I still have friendships from that."

"I think they understood each other and what they discovered is they can work well together."

"There was some screaming and shouting but there was also a lot of laughter."

Any conflict management textbook or article you read recognizes the importance of having an understanding and caring for another person's deeply held values. Having this empathy for another person is a key ingredient to opening channels for effective communications (McCoy, to be published). Getting to know each other on a personal level allows this process to begin. The "understanding" that comes with the development of personal relationships is extremely important to the ability of groups to find resolution to resource issues. This understanding is founded on human feelings and emotions relative to deeply held beliefs and values. Until individuals can connect on this *level* there is very little hope of finding a technical "scientific" solution to the issues under discussion. Because of this it is important to deal with this topic and not hope that it will simply go away if left alone (Bumstead, 1995).

Land management agencies, and important individuals within the agencies, have a hard time buying into, accepting, addressing and capitalizing on this fact. Maybe seeing how important this topic was for the work group participants will help stress the significance of this topic.

Respect/Dignity:

Typifying Quotations:

"As a group we respected each other; we treated each other with respect and dignity."

"The respect they had for each other is a key element-"

"If you give them the same respect back, pretty soon you get a little respect for each other and then it

grows from there."

"I think one of the good things is this process has given the community in (name) a, what I feel is a very open relationship with the Forest Service over there."

There were a few members of these groups that had serious reservations about the significance and/or accomplishments of the work groups. Even those people discussed the importance of respect they had for individuals from the other "camp" *and* that they believed the respect was reciprocated. How did this occur? In part because each group disciplined themselves to "hear people out" without attacking their individual opinions or values. This is a key element in opening communication pathways that contribute to effective interpersonal relations. This attribute was common to all of the study groups. There will be more on this topic under the **Education and Learning** section.

Wariness/Watchful:

Typifying Quotations:

"One had to be thoughtful, wary at times, and so the word *noble adversary* came up quite a bit."

"All of our input and our draft went back into some "hole", wherever it goes; when it comes out it comes out differently."

"We put all this time into it, I just hope it doesn't sit on the shelf."

"It takes a long time to build that trust and it can easily be done in, you know."

Most of the wary and watchful statements were directed at the agencies. Watchful concern expressions were distributed fairly equally among the public and agency work group participants. Several people spoke of the agencies in cynical and sarcastic tones. The most frequently voiced concern was about whether their efforts would ever get implemented. Some of the agency interviewees talked in an almost shame faced way about the agencies lack of follow through of their groups, work. Only one

of the four study groups were fully engaged in the implementation phase of the their planning effort.

There was also some expression of wariness among the various interest group members towards one another. So while a general trusting relationship has been established the participants recognize that it is still somewhat fragile and will have to be carefully nurtured.

2. Process and Structure:

This section encompasses the "nitty gritty" working aspects of these groups. McCoy, Krumpe and Cowles do a good job of summarizing important founding principles of successful public involvement programs on page 9 of the work they produced for the ICBEMP (McCoy, to be published) . Each work group established an operational procedure and working methodology for their project. Having such methodologies is important to the success or failure of any committee or work group. The participants offer some interesting perspectives of their groups key strengths and weaknesses. Please remember that these groups have been successful and that many of the criticisms they offer of themselves are thoughts on how they could have been even better. Much can be learned from the points brought forth by the interviewees.

TIME is the first topic within this category. The intention is to make a big deal out of **TIME**. Every person discussed time as an important factor relative to their work group and/or their personal lives.

Time: (Negative Expressions)

Typifying Quotations:

"Well, the most negative thing is just it takes so much time."

"Oh, it drug on forever."

"The biggest shortfall was timing. We blew it on timing."

Many of the participants spoke of "time" from this negative perspective. The most common complaint was that the processes used to accomplish the task were either ill defined or that they allowed themselves to be sidetracked and/or backtracked too frequently. Both of these topics will be discussed further in this section under the heading **Operational Processes**. All of the work groups had been involved with their respective projects for several years. Additionally each of the work groups were tackling resource management challenges that were tied to issues raised and not resolved during Forest Planning or other foundational management planning processes.

Time: (Recognition That Work Groups Take Time)

Typifying Quotations:

"I guess we have to realize these things take time."

"When you work in a working group thing, it doesn't happen fast."

"I mean, it's gotta take a period though of hollering and belling at each other and kind of scratching at your own territory."

Several people recognized that learning to work together effectively is a time consuming task. Most interviewees were tolerant and understanding of the time it took to accomplish these undertakings. A few agency personnel were less tolerant of line officers who seemingly didn't understand that this type of public participation is a time consuming undertaking under the best of circumstances.

Time: (Positive Expressions)

Typifying Quotations:

"In actuality it's probably a faster process than going to court."

"The best thing that happened out of that was this group of people spent that many hours together in the same room and listening ..."

"It takes a long time to build that trust."

Finally, several people within the groups discussed a belief that the expenditure of time would prove beneficial in the long run. Kai Lee has also taken note of this topic; he says: "In cases previously characterized by lengthy litigation and embittered conflict, informal negotiations have produced plans of action acceptable to traditional adversary." (Lee, 1989). They see important long term value in the development of interpersonal relationships relative to future interactions. Agency participants pointed out the potential that time spent in these work groups could result in fewer appeals and court actions. This might result, then, in less time overall given our current workload in appeals and court actions. Several people pointed out that decisions reached through these processes were more likely to *be* honored than *appeal* or court ordered decisions.

Operational Processes: (Mission/Vision/Goals)

Typifying Quotations:

"When we started out with the objectives. Our ultimate goal and the objectives were very well defined."

"But I mean to tell you these people did one heck of a job at that. They made a superb job of making the intent clear to us and the process clear to us."

"And yes, I think it did eventually yield a document that said this is our vision for (name) Ranger District in the year 2010."

"But I never really felt that the task force truly knew how this information was going to be applied. That was my major criticism."

"It might be worth explicitly defining the goal beforehand, maybe a little bit more than we did. You

know, I mean, we had this sort of management plan, but we didn't come up with anything tangible."

"They were just saying let's see if we can all get together and come up with a vision that we all would agree as where we want to see things headed. It was never clear and that was one criticism I heard of this process."

Every group spent some time evaluating and describing to themselves what they wanted to accomplish. They also developed varying methodologies and working processes to accomplish the task. Kai Lee noted the importance developing sound processes and concluded: "Once a framework for continuing negotiation is in place, it is possible for parties to work out the details, a process I shall call "planning" even when the character of the agreement is a settlement." (Lee, 1989). Having planning processes and sideboard structures in place contributed significantly to the success of these groups. It is important to point out, however, that individual group members described the goals and/or objectives of their projects with what sounded to the interviewers as quite a variety of answers. This would indicate that the groups needed some additional internal clarification relative to this subject.

One suggestion, for future improvements, would be for the groups to carefully formalize this aspect of the planning process by fully documenting the Mission/Vision/Goal statements and agreed to operating procedures. This is the first item listed on page 9 of the McCoy, Krumpe, Cowles work referenced earlier (McCoy, to be published). Additionally, since three of the four groups seemed stalled at the point of implementation, the operational procedures need be to include implementation and monitoring processes to ensure the successful outcomes everyone desires.

Operational Processes: (Meeting Management Strengths)

Typifying Quotations:

Interviewer: "So it was like a communications kind of workshop then?"

Interviewee: "Yes it was. It was about understanding group dynamics and how they work.

... I think that

was very critical to the success of this group."

"We treated each other with respect and dignity and not as enemies."

"When you create that kind of openness you move the sideboard, the constraints of, thinking. "

"We actually had some really great mediators that helped us as a group, get down some similarities and basic values that were shared and go forth from that point."

"Well, we had some very in-depth discussions before we ever started."

" So they would start off with everyone in a circle and then they would ask you what you hoped to achieve. The rancher or the foreman might say "I'm just trying to survive." and somebody else says "Hey I wanna see the riparian areas and the fisheries taken care of and protected. " Different people have different kind of views as you go around. Interesting technique."

As the interviews progressed it became apparent that each group had someone, or the whole group, trained in meeting management and effective communication techniques. Additionally, most of the groups paid close attention to pre-planning their meetings. The value of detailed advance planning for meetings and of having a good facilitator is often underestimated by employees of government agencies. It is not an accident that we saw the positive statements, shown above, which demonstrate that these groups carefully planned their meetings and employed facilitative skills during the meetings. Meeting management techniques are well studied and documented. The interviewees are telling us that paying more attention to the advice given in these studies will pay significant dividends.

Operational Processes: (Meeting Management Difficulties)

Typifying Quotations:

"As I look back on it it is kind of humorous that the task force had to be reined in on a regular basis because we did have a tendency to wander outside our mandate and outside the sideboards."

"We had a lot of differences on the table and a lot of preaching and pontificating."

"They may say we're gonna talk about wildlife and then somebody would say; *"Well have you heard about what they are doing over in (place) in the watershed?"* Then they'd spend the whole two or three hours talking about the watershed. That was one of the reasons we feel it took so long to get to a document."

"It seemed like there was a waste of time repeatedly in arguing over tangential issues. That's probably characteristic of any citizens involvement."

"I guess uh, my frustrations were not the time it took, particularly, but just lack of people's ability to listen to what was going on."

Communication difficulties surfaced repeatedly during the interviews even though the groups had individuals, or the whole group, trained in group dynamics and/or communication skill techniques. Group discipline and dedication to effective communication techniques is an essential element of any successful work group. The above quotations demonstrate that, even in trained groups, this area needs continual attention.

Operational Processes: (Organization & Transfers)

Typifying Quotations:

"Some sort of outline would have helped in terms of how things will be, and these are the people,

positions, and maybe even people names, you could plug those into the positions."

"We went through 3 Rangers in this whole process and every Ranger has his own idea of how the project should be run."

"... the Ranger always had a different agenda type thing and that always got in the way."

The researchers found that private citizens who committed to participating on a work group followed through on their commitment; often with great personal sacrifices of time. Some members drove 2 or more hours each way to attend the meetings and never missed a meeting. The consistency problem arose within the agencies. In the *Institutional and Legal Barriers to Ecosystem Management* paper written by Schlager and Freimund for the ICBEMP they note that: "Uncertainty regarding the public agencies, management direction and commitment to ecosystem management permeated the survey responses." (Schlager, to be published) . Certain people do play key roles within the agencies and when they transfer-it does present a problem for these work groups. Team leaders and District Rangers are prime examples of key agency personnel.

Operational Processes: (Skill Mix)

Typifying Quotations:

"My first preference, if I had a choice, is actually trying to manage a stand of timber."

"That was a real love-in. I, when that happened, I wasn't too impressed with that. That was a little early in the process for us, or for me personally, to get into something like that. We had to be really open with everybody and accept everybody's opinion as value, as valuable as mine and I, I wasn't ready for that position. I didn't think that that was for me at that point. I'm probably a little bit more open for something like that now than I was then. I sat through it."

"Anyway, my first meeting with (name), I didn't trust him a bit. This was like three, four years into consensus. I just didn't care for the way he handled himself in a group. He looked really kind of nervous. He didn't really want to be there."

The first two quotations demonstrate that some interviewees felt discomfort in dealing with people and had a preference for doing field work ("real work"). The third quotation demonstrates that some participants recognized discomfort in some important agency employees. Schlager and Friemund, in the paper referenced above note: "Natural resource professionals "tend to lack a social orientation; rather, they are oriented to the protection and management of things -trees, water, forage and wildlife" (Schlager, to be published) The interviewers noted that the few interviewees who expressed personal discomfort regarding this subject were always male and either worked for the government or industry. only a few interviewees expressed this discomfort but enough individuals did bring it up to make it worthy of discussion. The agencies should carefully ask themselves what kind of individuals they want to working closely with these groups? Should they be technical scientists with little inclination or desire to work with the public? Should they be individuals skilled in interpersonal relations but with limited "technical" skills? Possibly some combination or mixture of the two skill areas?

Operational Processes: (Group Responsibility & Decision Processes)

Typifying Quotations:

"There is no charter for the group. There is nothing written, there is no written charter for the working group."

"We had big discussion about whether it should be a consensus group or not and we never tried to come to consensus."

"I had a little statement that I gave every time I was there: *This isn't a democracy, we are not going to vote on a solution. The Forest Service has the*

authority and responsibility to make a decision. We are willing to do that.”

"If there are some decisions to be made ahead of time, tell them. Make sure that they understand absolutely totally what the baseline is that you are starting from. Absolutely."

"Well, see what we did was when we ran into the F.A.C.A. rock (laughter). What we did was basically dissolved the consensus group on the district. The group didn't dissolve, we withdrew."

Each work group developed its own internal decision processes. This ranged from trying to truly operate from a consensus basis within the group to groups that clearly said they were not trying to reach consensus. However, even within those groups the participants frequently discussed topics to the point of finding "grudging acceptance" of a particular topical area.

The clarity of purpose and process became blurred as the work efforts were submitted to the bureaucracies for approval and implementation. One of the four groups (see third quotation above) did consistently and clearly state that their group was not a "consensus" group and that the agency would make the decisions.

The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) does cause confusion for these groups and the agency personnel working with the groups. Schlager and Friemund report; "The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) was the most commonly mentioned legal barrier to involving humans in ecosystem management and the second most mentioned barrier overall." (Schlager, to be published). One of the study groups interviewed for this paper recently had the involved agency decide to *officially* withdraw from the group. In reality, individuals within this agency have continued to participate in an *unofficial* capacity. This puts them in an unfortunate and precarious position. Everyone seems to recognize the confusion surrounding this subject and know that it needs additional clarification.

3. **Education and Learning:**

This section is divided into six subtopics. Those topics are:

Education: (Social/Interpersonal Skills)

Education: (Biophysical Sciences)

Mutual Learning:

Group Dynamics:

Common Sense:

Professional Arrogance:

The first two headings segregate and recognize the importance of two distinct formalized aspects of "technical" knowledge. Technical knowledge, by the researchers definition, includes biophysical and social education skills. Next, the **Mutual Learning** heading demonstrates how all members of work groups can learn from the unique insights of each individual within the group. Kai Lee notes that "Learning is achieved through debates that cross lines of advocacy, changing the positions of groups and sometimes altering the character of conflict among them." (Lee, 1989). The synergy that results in these situations is essential to the success of these groups. The **Group Dynamics** heading could have been included in the Social/Interpersonal Skills section but was separated to keep each heading brief. Good old **Common Sense**, or the lack there-of, was an important topical area for at least one member of each group. Finally, in the ideal world we wouldn't find a **Professional Arrogance** topical area. We can all learn from one another. However, some members of these groups apparently failed to recognize this fact. Enough interviewees noticed this trait and discussed it to warrant discussion.

Education: (Social/Interpersonal Skills)

Typifying Quotations:

Interviewee: "I think that attitude of listening to each other with respect was crucial and in fact, colored the deliberations of the group for years to come."

Interviewer: "Without that training do you think that group would of sprung up eventually anyway?"

Interviewee: "No way."

"(NAME) didn't make anybody mad, he kept them moving along and he did an excellent job I thought. When he wasn't there we sort of strayed away a couple of times, and some people kind of had to reorganize and start over."

"We were fortunate in having a really brilliant young guy, this (name), from the federal agency was on these tours. He seldom talked. He was listening all the time.,"

The second and third typifying quotations above were repeatedly surfaced by the interviewees of every group. These statements served as a signal to the interviewers that a high degree of interpersonal skill was present somewhere within each group and that these skills were recognized by many of the interviewees as having played an extremely important role in their group success.

When the interviewers pursued these statements they found that, indeed, within each of these groups some individual, or the whole membership, would have a high degree of interpersonal skill knowledge. Two of the groups employed techniques developed by Bob Chadwick and one group used the methods promoted by Hans and Annemarie Bleiker; who are successful private consultants in this field. Additionally, one group had a person with these skills readily available to them for meeting planning consultation and advice. They discussed a variety of meeting management techniques and possible ways to handle situations that might arise amongst their membership during the upcoming meeting. The old saying "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,, is an adage worth paying attention to.

Education: (Bio-Physical Sciences)

Typifying Quotations:

"We had this parade of specialists addressing different issues, you know a wildlife specialist, law enforcement

specialist, fisheries person, and blah blah blah, it went on and on. ... And I remember thinking, boy this is really inappropriate as a group, I mean individuals may, but we don't know enough about the biology of the fisheries, or the specifics of the habitat issues, and we don't, so there's all the science stuff.,,

"Yes, we talked quite a bit about that. Monitoring was the key word. And education was the one, the one thing that we thought should be important. We encouraged education - letting people know what the situation is, what they can and can't do out there."

The first quotation illustrates that resource management knowledge was important to the groups. At least one interviewee from each group brought this topic up during the course of the interview. Private citizen participants also recognized that many of their members were not schooled in the biophysical sciences. The opportunity for mutual learning (see Mutual Learning) is high within these groups. In the last quote we see that the groups recognize the need to follow their work by monitoring the implemented projects.

Mutual Learning:

Typifying Quotations:

"I hope that through the learning process we can look back on what went right and what went wrong and make it a more efficient process."

"It was a big learning process for one. I've always had these ideas, as being part of the public, of what the Forest Service should do. It was an eye opener to realize who they had to deal with and what they had to deal with and actually coming up with a plan."

"Actually I think, um, the biggest gain was probably more on the Forest Service end. That was that uh, a few of the key ID team members, basically learned uh, to listen. Learned how to listen to the public and learned to have some professional humility."

"I could speak a little bit more about the power of the circle. Something about how it helps you seek and find truth. I don't know what it is but I think the simplest things change our course. What I like about a circle is I'm finding that truth if you will, or that solution we're all trying to find is not on a linear scale. It moves in a dynamic way."

During the analysis of the interviews, the researchers surfaced three distinct types of mutual learning that took place within these groups. First is the recognition that everyone (internal or external to the process) can learn from the experiences of these groups. Secondly, private citizens gain an appreciation for the complexity of land management through this close association with resource management planning efforts (see the second quote). Finally, some agency employees did take notice of the unique insights offered by some of the citizen participants and learned from them; others apparently did not. Some agency personnel listen for, and value, insights offered by the public and learn from them. Some concern was expressed, however, among the interviewees about a tendency for agency personnel to display "professional arrogance", the next topic.

Professional Arrogance/ Tunnel Vision:

Typifying Quotations:

"I know that this professional arrogance thing with the Forest Service really got in the way of things. And I was guilty of it along with the rest of the ID team and Ranger, and everybody involved was guilty of it to some extent. That seemed to be our biggest problem with listening to the public and it got to the point where some ID team members were almost hostile towards the group. There were some people on the ID Team that would, that just never changed, never moved from that way of thinking, and that, turned into a problem."

"We start justifying our actions with our professional, you know our functional biases saying; *"Well we can't, we can't partial cut in this setting, that's unheard of you know. We can't do that."* And then um, you know, we just didn't like what we heard."

"That was probably the most difficult part about it. You've got a bunch of unprofessional or uneducated people who are not professional trying to sit together at the same table and hammer out some of these things and that's a difficult thing to do."

In the first two quotations agency employees, in retrospect, are able to see where they and other agency team members displayed professional arrogance. They recognize that this arrogance got in the way of optimal group performance. The validity of this point is echoed in Schlager and Friemund's earlier referenced work (Schlager, to be published). Other authors have noted that natural resource management agencies, paradigms fail because they are premised on resource use and not on noncommercial and preservation values (Wondolleck, 1988). Whatever the cause, the professional arrogance vibrations are not viewed in a positive light by the public.

The final quotation above, made by an agency employee, could be interpreted by some as being somewhat arrogant. Very few "arrogant" sounding statements were made by agency interviewees during the interviews. This may indicate that the arrogant statements and actions were more likely to be heard from agency personnel who have less training and exposure to such groups than the personnel interviewed in this study.

Group Dynamics:

Typifying Quotations:

"I think so much of it depends on the dynamics of the group. You can get far with a good facilitator. You can get uh probably further with like-minded people but you wouldn't be as inclusive. So I think training in terms of systems and process is worth it because without that you're operating with different game rules."

"I think the best groups are the ones who feel safe. That they can experience and share all emotions. Getting out of the box."

"The room that we're in, the environment we're in, how

we meet, maybe just what we ate, all of this stuff has a lot to do with how we I re gonna interact with one another."

"Yeah, right. Actually, I'll just very quickly, cause I don't wanna stay on it real long but the circle just cut I s down hierarchy. In a circle things begin to cycle, you begin to embrace. See these words? You are here not to fight and to debate, but to embrace one another."

"The only other thing I wanted to mention is that we've kind of thought it would have helped our group to get some American-Indian perspective in regards to ecosystem management. The agency hasn't been very good about doing that and for some reason the AmericanIndian groups haven't responded in the manner that we expected."

"The interesting thing I noticed was that the wives would speak a little more openly. They would get to talking a little bit and the old, you know, the old man started talking up a little more too. It added a different perspective and encouraged the old man not to just sit back and grumble and grunt and say; *"This is a bunch of crap."*

The first two quotations above demonstrate the insight group members have regarding the importance of group dynamics. Effective work groups, do produce better solutions. (Get supporting statement). All the rest of these quotations demonstrate the unique insights individuals have relative to working groups. Astute agency employees can capitalize on these insights and learn from them for future applications.

The discussion about the circle was delivered with such passion we decided to explore it further. Here is an interesting statement we found during our exploration: *"The contradictions of life are usually resolved in narration. A geometric figure may serve the same purpose of harmonizing the opposites, and of such figures the most important is the circle of mandala. The circle, a symbol of wholeness and harmony, is a recurrent motif in the arts of ancient Eastern civilizations, in the thinking of ancient Greece, in Christian art, in the alchemical practices of the*

Middle Ages and in the healing circle of the Navaho. Jungian psychoanalysts see the circle as an archetypal image of the reconciliation of opposites, common to all mankind." (Yi-Fu Tuan, 1974).

The point being that the beneficial aspects of a circle seem to be well known. Should more agency integration efforts be conducted in this form?

Common Sense:

Typifying Quotations:

"Yeah. (laughter in background) Common sense has been lost. Right, common sense has been, you know, and then I could tell you another story." (aside: and he did)

"I've seen a million folks come and go. They didn't know who they were talking to, what their job was."

"They give you regulations to go by and he doesn't know whether to, you know, what's going on. He has no clue."

This topic was primarily brought up by individuals who earn their living from resource management activities conducted on public lands. These individuals typically had a lot of practical experience working on the land. It is frustrating for them to find themselves having to take instructions from agency employees with little practical work experience. Sensitivity to this situation from both parties is probably advisable.

4. Commitment:

Like much of the preceding material there were several perspectives offered on this categorical heading. Commitments were discussed from several perspectives. The most prominent among the discussions addressed the lack of agency follow through to commitments that group members thought had been made.

As before these perspectives are explained through the use of subtopic headings which follow:.

Committment to the Resource:

Typifying Quotations:

"And the main consensus we found, from I think everybody, is everybody loved the land. That's where you start from."

"That's why we're all here. To benefit the resource. That's why the professionals are in their office throughout the (name) right now, or out on the ground. It's not Just a paycheck to them and for me it's not just something that takes the place of television late at night to come to these meetings. We want to benefit the resource."

Interviewer: "What's the best thing that you think has resulted from your involvement with this?"

Interviewee: "Probably a feeling of mutual confidence that nobody is out to mess over somebody else or to destroy the landscape."

This personal committment to the resource is clearly the glue that draws and holds diverse interests together. Members of every work group came to this realization during the course of their group effort.

This point is worth remembering.

Decision Makers:

Typifying Quotations:

"It was never clear that there was a commitment on the part of the higher-ups of the Forest Service to implement anything that came out of this group."

"He did try to stick up for himself a little bit, but they, boy they run him into a corner, and he backed down all -the way."

Interviewer: "The SO has been slow?"

Interviewee: "Yeah, yeah. I personally have felt that we've been fighting uphill battles. You may get some lip service, but really not true support."

"The group, especially the people that were outside the Service, found it real frustrating. I think they may have said; *"Well, I thought: we had a deal here."* The first impression was *"We had a deal and now as the Forest Supervisor, you are backing off on the deal because your saying you don't think you have the authority to do this, we have to go to the Region Forester and chances that: it will go through may be slim."* Basically they weren't to happy about it."

Obviously people watch and remember what key agency officials say. These quotations demonstrate that line officers have to carefully think through any commitment they make to such groups. Once the commitment is made, if the agency values creditability, then they best be adhered to and implemented. This may have been the most sensitive (wary watchfulness) topic that emerged during the interviews. So that line officers don't feel bad if they read this section, it needs to be pointed out that several statements were made about the good things certain District Rangers and Forest Supervisors accomplished for them and their group.

Agency Turnover:

Typifying Quotations:

"It takes a person being in place for a few years to gain and establish his/her creditability. Two to three years isn't enough."

"Well, it's historical. I think everything is viewed with suspicion because of past history. People who move a lot forget it. They are off somewhere else, it doesn't matter. People who live in a community, they remember."

"You know in this- county, in this community, uh, there's been a lot of standing cynicism to some degree

against the Forest Service. I think, and rightfully so, in the sense of people coming and going, sort of the 90 day wonder syndrome, only maybe a little bit longer than that. I've seen a million folks come and go. They didn't know who they were talking to, what their job was."

This subject was frequently brought up. One high performing agency team leader had been given another assignment prior to several aspects of their projects full implementation. This was troublesome for the employee and the project. Schlager recommends that "The system must reward the individuals trying to implement these changes (reference to ecosystem management) if it hopes to encourage them to do so." (Schlager, to be published) . In the opinion of the researchers the good planning effort is now suffering from this premature reassignment. It seemed like the interviewees were telling the researchers that if these projects are worth several years of planning that they should be worth the dedication and commitment to see through to conclusion. This important point is still relevant to three of the four groups. One group is actively implementing and monitoring their planning efforts.

Personal Contribution and Commitment:

Typifying Quotations:

"Quite frankly that's a long process to bring unpaid people on board and expect them to maintain their level of energy and involvement over two years. I mean most people do have lives."

"I was actually chosen an alternate from the original group. And I never missed a meeting."

"I wasn't going to be left out. I was going to crash the door if I had to. (laugh)"

"I wouldn't hesitate a moment to do it again."

"And that is a XXXXX of a commitment for many people. A lot of small business owners and family people, you know evenings, you know, we were meeting once a month,

sometimes twice a month, pretty regularly.”

Several people brought up the fact that they were committing their time to these projects without compensation. Members of conservation groups were especially sensitive to this topic. They suggested that the agencies examine this topic and see if there is some mechanism available to help offset this financial burden. The dedication of time displayed by the involved citizens is a real testimony to each of them for their personnel commitment to the group and the resource. People wouldn't stick through this type of involvement unless they cared deeply for their group and the resource.

5. **Outcomes: (Follow-Thru/Lack of Follow-Thru)**

This heading was originally analyzed and covered within the commitments heading. After discussion and axial coding of the data it was determined that this topic was significant in and of itself. This heading combined with the amount of time it took each group to accomplish the task are the areas where the most room for improvement exists.

Typifying Quotations:

"We were always concerned that there were a number of black holes, or one word that we used was a gauntlet that whatever we developed here at the District and Forest level had to go through the OR and WO. And we wondered what kind of beast it would be when it came back.”

“... and all our input, it went back into some hole, wherever it goes; ...”

Interviewee: "So, everything to me seems like it's plan, plan, plan and never have ...

Interviewer: "No action?"

Interviewee: "No, nothing ever get's done."

"The plans can be great but if you don't do anything with them, they are just so much paperwork and they don't mean anything."

The "**Outcomes**" topic was presented last because this topic was brought up repeatedly by the interviewees as being the **biggest drawback** to the groups having a truly outstanding success. The intention is have the reader leave this section with a clear idea of how they could make a future venture even more successful than these. Make sure the planned work gets accomplished.

The final suggestion in this section of the paper is for the agencies to carefully select the people they assign to these projects and then retain them through the life of the project. Each group mentioned that some key person had transferred and that the new person didn't give as much emphasis to the project as the previous employee. Continuity of key agency people seems like an important point to consider if you want finished work. A point worth committing to!

III. FINDINGS:

This section begins with direct responses to the 3 research questions presented at the beginning of the paper. The section concludes with a brief exploration of potential sociological theories that emerged from the qualitative analysis of the data.

Question 1: Do the participants of working groups (sometimes loosely called "consensus" groups) believe that such groups are an effective way for involved publics and the agencies to move past "gridlock"?

Here are some of the answers offered by the participants relative to this question:

"By my standards we had an outstanding success."

"I think our task force was quite successful."

"It was unique, in my experiences, that we've had an opportunity to work on something that ultimately ended as positively as it did.,,

"I wouldn't hesitate a moment to do it again."

The participants clearly answered this question with a resounding YES! Of the 41 people interviewed only 4 expressed serious reservation about the overall utility of these groups. Even those individuals recognized the value of interacting with people with values somewhat different from their own. Many social scientists support the concept of public agencies adopting policies that would encourage more and more of these ventures. Julia Wondolleck offers some encouraging words in her book when she says: "Given the historical willingness of the Forest Service to experiment, to be on the forefront of public involvement efforts at the federal level, and given how much it and its constituent groups potentially have to gain, the promise of such dispute resolution efforts is great." (Wondolleck, 1988).

The references below are for those of you who would like to become a little more familiar with this form of public participation by a few well known authorities and practitioners:

- Public Lands Conflict and Resolution, Julia M. Wondolleck, Plenum Press, 1988.
- Compass and Gyroscope, Integrating Science and Politics for the Environment, Kai N. Lee, Heldref Publications, 1989.
- Citizen Participation Handbook, for public officials and other professionals serving the public, Hans and Annemarie Bliker, 1981.

The authors of this paper are fully supportive of the involvement style advocated in the above publications. Additionally, we are confident that other work groups, pondering similar undertakings, could gain a lot by studying the material presented in this paper. The potential for success to those who capitalize on these groups positive outcomes, and adopted measures to forstall some of their shortcomings would be very high. Public participation undertakings of this sort are learnable skills.

Question 2: What happens when more than one organizational level of government or interest group becomes involved in a work group?

In the Krannich et.al. paper (Krannich, to be published) the authors point out that you can expect several types of hierarchial conflicting interests to be felt. Those authors believe that one well documented type of conflict is; "that between "traditional" local people and non-local environmental interests" (Krannich, to be published) . Another heirarchial influence mentioned by them is; "Conflicts may emerge between local communities that are part of the same land management region, but have different views and values about how the land should be managed." (Krannich, to be published) . A final piece of advise offered by these authors is that: "While it is almost inevitable that social assessments will need to focus attention on localized constituencies and stakeholders, it is also often important to extend assessment to include relevant regional constituencies and stakeholders." (Krannich, to be published)

The researchers of this paper were interested to see what kind of responses would be received when this question was asked. The result was that the participants had a wide variety of perceptions and experiences to report, relative to this topic. Responses have been categorized into 7 sub-topic headings. The first 3 headings directly respond to the research question and the last 5 sub-topic headings respond but in a more tangential manner.

Positive Organizational Influences:

Typifying Quotations:

Interviewer: "What kind of influence do you think that the regional environmental community had on the local people? In terms of affecting the work groups position?"

Interviewee: "No, not much. The regional community is pretty supportive of what we're doing. As a matter of fact, they've been real helpful."

"I guess maybe the managers have done a good job there and they have run interference for us people on the ground."?

"It seemed to me the District had the freedom to put that thing together ..."

Negative Organizational Influences:

Typifying Quotations:

"But the screens we felt were too restrictive and we asked, in our communication within NRDC, we sent them our material and we sent them our plan and asked, basically asked their blessing on it and said, let us try this. They wouldn't do it. They don't wanna release any of that authority or responsibility to a local group on the ground. They don't wanna relinquish that control I guess is what I'm trying to say."

Interviewer: "How about the Regional or Washington of fire?"

Interviewee: "Well, the regional office isn't gonna, you know, the supervisors office isn't gonna come in there and really lobby for this thing. The regional office is gonna find all kinds of bricks, it's not gonna wanna do anything."

"It probably hindered because they were worried about how the national group would perceive them so they were probably less willing to compromise."

Little to No Organizational Influence:

Typifying Quotations:

"There wasn't any, there wasn't anyone there operating in an official capacity for any particular group as such."

Interviewer: "Are they tied into one another and influencing one another?"

Interviewee: "I really don't know."

The influence of organizational hierarchies were seldom raised in a direct fashion by the interviewees. When they touched on the subject during their interviews they were then directly asked to consider organizational influences on their project. Many interviewees had to ponder this question, or have the question restated. This topic didn't seem to be a big thing on their minds. Krannich, Carroll, Daniels and Walker address this topic in some detail in their contracted work for the ICBEMP. They say, in part: "Managers and policy makers need to be aware that the level at which they open up planning efforts to public involvement will bear directly on the nature and scope of input received." (Krannich, to be published). This advice is an important point for managers to consider as they begin planning their public involvement strategies for any given project.

As you can see from the above quotations a wide variety of perspectives emerged as the interviewees responded to this question. Some felt strongly that there were positive effects. Some felt just the opposite way. Some people didn't seem to

understand what was being asked and had to have the question repeated before they could respond. One interviewee said he wouldn't even participate in this type of work group unless he was sure that governmental overhead personnel were actively brought into the process from the outset. His notion was to get early and continual support for funding and to avoid "surprises" and rejections later in the project. This idea seems worth noting.

The next 4 subtopic headings that emerged during the interviews are tangential to the direct question but worthy of discussion.

Pressure to Perform:

Typifying Quotation:

"We have a certain responsibility out there to make sure this thing works."

"It's not anything that anybody is putting on us; it's just pressure you know you have to perform."

Several governmental employees and a few interest group members commented that they felt a responsibility and commitment to making their group undertaking work because they knew other people were observing their efforts. These statements were not made in a negative way. Rather, the members seemed to accept the challenge and responsibility of making their effort work because they were committed to this type of undertaking.

Favor Local Control:

Typifying Quotations:

"No, I'm just tired of the way people from the outside can come in here and handle your life."

"I know that if you get the right group, you can get a very balanced view locally. It has the benefit of a connection to the land."

Only a few individuals responded in the above fashion when

they were asked to consider the notion of organizational hierarchical impacts to their project. However, the researchers sensed that most group participants would just as soon be left to control their own planning and resource management affairs without direct "from above" interference.

Individual Independence:

Typifying Quotations:

"I represented the cattle industry and the outfitter industry. I really didn't want to be out in the, I didn't want to be chosen as member of either the outfitting or the ranching industry. I wanted to be flexible enough so that I could represent both."

"They made some remarks like, *well ol (interviewee name) he gonna get in bed with the (interest group) or he's gonna get in bed with these (agency names); and I told them they can just blow it out their (expletives) ear. I'm taking care of it the way I think is right!*"

Ranchers and outfitters were especially outspoken and firm in statements such as the above. It appeared that they were ready to follow their individual beliefs regardless of what their organizations might feel. However, like the rest of the group participants they were confident that they were aware of the position of their organizations and believed that the concepts and planning direction they supported would also serve their organizational interests in the long run.

Timber Industry Response

Typifying Quotations:

"I work with committees and teams and that sort of thing, we go back and we think about what our responses are, ..."

"The company has allowed us to be fairly open to change

our positions and stuff.”

Of the various public interest groups it appeared that timber industry representatives spent more time working with their I organizations than other interest group representatives. That is not to say that individual representatives were precluded from making their own decisions within the work group setting. All of these representatives indicated that their organizational hierarchy trusted their independent judgment and allowed them the freedom to make independent decisions.

Summary: Given the wide range of responses to the hierarchy question we are left with the problem of trying to make some overall "sense" or pattern to the responses. First, because of the diversity of responses from group to group and within the groups it appears that the effects of organizational hierarchies on groups such as these are extremely variable. It is probably safe to say that some real or perceived organizational influences were felt within each group and by various individuals. On the other hand, the effects ranged from definitely positive, to definitely negative, with a variety of real and perceptual experiences inbetween. As we examine the collective data relative to this question we draw, mostly through indirect inference, the following conclusions about consensus groups and the individual participants:

- They favor "local" control over their projects.
- They favor policy and financial support from "higher" organizational entities but want that support without controlling strings attached.
- They are willing to accept responsibility for the quality of their planning efforts and are willing to work long and hard to accomplish their task.

* This is understandable as Krannich points out: "Significant changes in land management at virtually any ecological scale are likely to have their most immediate and direct effect on local interests in the vicinity of the lands in question." (Krannich, to be published)

Question 3: What topics and concepts would the interviewees bring up and discuss of their own accord?

Work group participants surfaced many important concepts during their interviews. Everyone interviewed became mentally immersed in the interview as they expressed the thoughts that were important to them. The authors of this paper and the interviewees believe the positive feelings and relationships that developed within each work group were **THE** most important accomplishment of these groups. We are confident that groups considering similar undertakings could gain a lot by studying and adopting many of the concepts presented in the **Participants Perspective** section of this paper. Another useful source of information compiled for the ICBEMP is the McCoy, Krumpe, Cowles paper earlier (McCoy, to be published). These groups, and other groups around the country are paving the way for other groups considering similar undertakings. This type of public participation may well be the best approach to resolving the complex challenges facing natural resource land management agencies. These people have demonstrated to us that people with diverse interests can work together successfully toward common goals.

B. Theoretical Discussion of Findings:

This portion of the paper attempts to present the findings of the researchers in the language of social theory. Thereby allowing more abstract discussion of the data and creating a format that may be useful for future comparative studies.

There are two basic types of theory associated with the qualitative analysis methodology (grounded theory) developed by Glaser and Strauss: substantive and formal (Glaser and **Strauss**, 1967) . Substantive theory is developed for a specific area of sociological inquiry, in this case public participation utilizing work groups to help guide natural resource management decisions.

Formal theory applies to many substantive cases within a given area. Therefore conclusions about public participation in natural resource management *combined* with other specifically characterized studies on topics such as consensus, public involvement in resolving disputes, group interaction patterns and interest representation may result in a formal theory perhaps dealing with conflict resolution. Although some useful insights

may emerge concerning formal theory, the focus here is on generating theory at a substantive level.

Appendix A. includes a justification for the development of social theory, the methodology for theory development and general principles for application of the theories.

Several categories emerged from the data as critical factors in the process of including the public in an attempt to end the gridlock that engulfs natural resource management on public lands today. These categories, presented in the Participants Perspective section of the paper, are: Feelings and Relationships, Process and Structure, Education and Learning, Commitment and Outcomes.

The need for effective communication, though not presented as a categorical heading, is another concept which was embedded in the interviews as being an extremely important skill in the effort to resolve natural resource management challenges. Combining this element with the categorical headings allows the generation of theory and the development of related hypotheses.

The theory we are interested in developing should address factors that contribute to the success of *goal-oriented group interaction*.

Based on the data, we can formulate several hypotheses relating to public/agency goal oriented action groups. Here are the hypothesis we propose: :

- 1) Public participation is more effective when:
 - a) there is a feeling of openness among the group members, and
 - b) enough time has been given for relationships to be established.
- 2) Group members are more likely to willingly put effort into achieving their goals if they:
 - a) believe the time spent in the process is worth the effort, and

- b) they have a clear understanding of the structure and objectives of the project.
- 3) Public participation is more likely to result in the achievement of goals if:
- a) group members are educated in the process of effective group interaction, and
 - b) members are willing to learn about varying interests from one another.
- 4) Public participation effectiveness increases when:
- a) members are consistently committed to the group,
 - b) hierarchical support is dependable, and
 - c) efforts of the group result in definable outcomes.

These hypotheses outline the theory of public participation analysis generated from the data collected from the various working groups in this research project. The next step is to determine the usefulness of this information. You may have noticed that the theory encompasses each of the categorical headings raised by the participants and addresses the hierarchical question posed by management and responded to by the participants.

Theory Application

Now that we have generated a theory of how to work effectively in public/ agency work groups, we can determine its utility to the participants of this study.

Glaser and Strauss developed a model for testing the validity of theory through examining categories of:

- Fitness
- Understandability
- Generality
- Control.

Fitness: Ensuring that a theory fits its substantive area is one of the basic tenets of grounded theory methodology. One of the problems with deductive theories is that researchers may be compelled to alter or adjust the data so they will prove correct the chosen theory for describing the situation at hand. With grounded theory, no presumptions are made about the research site until the data had been coded and analyzed. This prevents the researcher from interjecting personal values and beliefs into the analysis. In this case, the method of data collection (personal interviews) assists in assuring that the theory fits the specific data.

Understandability: Again, because the hypotheses have directly emerged from statements made by the subjects, it would appear safe to assume the participants and others would be able to understand the significance and validity of these hypotheses. They said doing these things contribute to the overall likelihood of success.

Generality: The generality of the theory and its components must make it applicable to a variety of situations within the daily operations of the research site. The proposed hypotheses deal with many aspects of group dynamics. Techniques contributing to effect group dynamics have been studied and documented across a wide array of situations. The suggestions and topics raised by these participants essentially verify existing group dynamic studies. Therefore, the proposed theories are well grounded and have demonstrated their generalizability through practice by these groups.

Control: Finally, the issue of control implies that the subjects are able to have enough control in everyday situations to make the application of the theory worth trying (Glaser and Strauss, p.245).

There are two facets to this issue worthy of discussion. First, most of the hypotheses deal with types of interaction which are easily within the control of the participants to manipulate. They are directly involved in aspects of their feelings and relationships as they develop trust and respect for their fellow group members. They can actively initiate and adhere to processes and structure through the establishment of clearly defined goals and objectives. They can create an environment conducive to education and learning as they open channels of communication and attempt to understand the positions of others. Finally, each person can adopt a high level of commitment to the process and by their own actions impart control through consistent participation and follow-thru.

Parts of the fourth hypothesis were formulated from a negative result of the study. The researchers detected frustration on the part of the interviewees as it related to the perceived and/or real lack of governmental hierarchial support. Agency turnover, commitments not honored and agency "black holes" all contributed to a perceived and sometimes real lack of agency hierarchial support. It is in these areas that more control and assurance concerning outcomes must be available to the group members (the public and local agency employees) if the theory and it's related hypotheses are to be of use.

Closing Theoretical Remarks

The purpose of this section has been to explain in theoretical terms the finding of the study. We hope this will be useful in future attempts improve upon the good work of the study participants. We are also hopeful that this will lay the foundation for the formulation of formal theory in the area of conflict resolution.

IV. RECOMMENDATIONS

There are probably hundreds of practical recommendations that could be made. The researchers have chosen to limit their recommendations to three topical areas;

Interpersonal Skills Training and Education

Meeting Management

Commitments/Outcomes

Here are some practical recommendations for each of these topical areas.

Recommendation 1: Interpersonal Skills Training and Education

If public land management agencies are truly interested in expanding this type of citizen participation in an effective manner interpersonal skills training and education should be at the top of their list for any employee who will be working with the groups. As long as we have employees who leave people feeling the way expressed by the following interviewee we know additional work is needed:

"Anyway, my first meeting with (name), I didn't trust him a bit. This was like three, four years into consensus. I just didn't care for the way he handled himself in a group. He looked really kind of nervous. He didn't really want to be there."

Recommendation 2: Meeting Management

You would think that the agencies would have this topic well in hand; given all the meetings we attend. Yet, even in these groups, the interviewers saw a variety of clear signals that some meetings were mismanaged. Many interviews touched on topics such as unclear mission/vision/goals for the group or the project, poorly designed agendas, room for improved facilitation, need for individuals to improve their group interaction skills. Relative to many groups, these groups are highly skilled in this field. Yet, they all noticed areas where they could have

improved their effectiveness had they paid more attention to meeting management techniques. The point is that we must pay attention to meeting management on a regular and consistent basis. Those who don't will pay a high price in the long run.

Two of the four groups studied conducted their meetings in a circular format. There is a lesson in this for others to consider. Both of these groups went through a "grounding" process at the start and end of each meeting. This process insists that each person be given the opportunity to express their thoughts on an equal footing. And that the thoughts they share will be listened to. This format places people on an equal footing. It avoids the "head table", authority figure, format often encountered in group meetings. We suggest that other groups give this format a try.

Finally, the circle is frequently used by Native Americans to describe many things; like the "circle of life" which integrates people and all things into the circle. Operating from a circular basis may help us breaking out of some outmoded linear operational patterns.

Recommendation 3: Commitments/Outcomes

It is important to make commitments. Agencies need to carefully think about any commitment they are contemplating. When a decision is made to make a commitment, to groups such as these, the agencies need to be prepared to follow through.

Make sure that project planning encompasses the methodology for implementation and monitoring. All but one of the study projects seem to be stumbling and/or stalled as it relates to implementation.

Be sensitive to the importance of organizational stability. Several of these important projects had key people transferred at critical points of the undertaking. When this happened the group suffered in a variety of ways and agency credibility was damaged.

V. APPENDIX:

**A. RESEARCH
METHODOLOGY**

B. BIBLIOGRAPHY

APPENDIX A. : RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

The intent of this appendix is to give the reader a fairly detailed review of the research procedures utilized in conducting this study. It is important to point out that this research is founded on the qualitative analysis methodologies described in the works of Barney Glaser, Anselm Strauss, Juliet Corbin and others (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973) (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). This type of research varies significantly from quantitative research in that statistical testing for verification of results is not employed. In Volume 13, 1990 of the *Qualitative Sociology Journal* Corbin and Strauss say; "Qualitative studies (and research proposals) are often judged by quantitatively oriented readers; by many, though not all, the judgment is made in terms of quantitative canons. ... Grounded theorists share a conviction with many other qualitative researchers that the usual canons of "good science" should be retained, but require *redefinition* in order to fit the realities of qualitative research and the complexities of social phenomena." (Corbin and Strauss, 1990). The researchers of this project have tried to follow the canons of "good" qualitative social science as prescribed by Glaser, Strauss, Corbin and others.

Develop Management Approved Research Objectives:

A detailed outline of the proposed research was developed through a series of conversations and draft outlines of work between the researchers and management. The final working outline was approved by management on 1/31/95. The primary research questions to address are:

Question 1: Do the participants of working groups (sometimes loosely called "consensus" groups) believe that such groups are an effective way for involved publics and the agencies to move past "gridlock"?

Question 2: What happens when more than one organizational level of government or interest group becomes involved in a work group?

Question 3: What topics and concepts would the participants of these work groups bring up and of their own accord?

Why these questions were selected:

- The first question arises from the researchers personal interest. The results should either support or refute the existing body of social science literature regarding the validity and effectiveness of "consensus" groups.
- The second question has not been widely addressed in environmental sociology literature. The question of "scale" has been somewhat of a thorny topic on the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project. Researching this aspect of social scale may give new insights to environmental sociologists.
- Analyzing these results should give sound insight of the participants. perspective of concepts and accomplishments of their groups. This insight can then be used as an adaptive management tool for other groups to considering similar undertakings.

2. Research Procedures:

Data Collection: The method of data collection was never really in question. Management pre-determined that personal interviews would be used. Phone or written surveys were never examined. This determination resulted from an earlier aborted attempt at data collection through a written questionnaire that was to be administered by 2 college seniors in conjunction with their senior class term paper. It just didn't work out well. Thus, management directed the personal interview route. With help from past Northern Arizona University Sociology Department Chair Dr. Kooros Mahmoudi interviewing techniques were studied and agreed upon. A significant part of the interviewing procedures and strategies were developed from the works of Raymond L. Gordon in his 4th edition of "Interviewing Strategy, Techniques, and Tactics" book (Gordon, 1987).

Here are the key interviewing techniques employed:

- Let the interviewee pick the site of the interview.
- Try to develop some degree of comfort between the interviewee and the interviewer before starting the interview.
- Conduct the interview in a conversational manner without getting into a specific question and answer format.
- Start the interview in a way that generates free flowing dialogue.
- Listen for important themes from the interviewees and probe those topics for additional detail and meaning.
- Directly ask the research questions when the interviewees bring up, or border on, those topics.

Data Gathering: (selection of groups and interviewees)

Case study work groups were selected months in advance of the interviewing process. The groups were selected for study because they had developed a reputation for having worked together successfully and they were willing to work with the Interior Columbia Basin Ecosystem Management Project prototype study team.

Here are the groups that were selected for study:

**PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
CASE STUDIES**

GROUP NAME	GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION	ORGANIZATION	PERCEPTION OF SUCCESS	KEY ISSUES
Trout Cr. Mts. Working Group	Southeast Oregon	ELM	Yes	Range/ Riparian
Pine R.D. Consen. Group	Northeastern Oregon	F.S.	Yes	District wide Management
Guiding the Course, WWRD	Southeastern Washington	F.S.	Yes	Forest Planning (rd.less areas)
Bridger Teton	Northwest Wyoming	F.S.	Yes	Wilderness Management

Interviewee Selection: The "on the ground" project leaders were contacted and potential interviewees were discussed. It was determined that interviewees would be selected to encompass the range of values and opinions found within each work group.

Here is the targeted mix of interviewees:

1. Agency team leader.
2. Agency most directly involved line officer or work supervisor of the agencies team leader.

3. Local conservation leader ("Environmentalist")
4. Less local conservation leader
5. Local private "multiple use leader" (Uses resources for economic purposes)
6. Less local private "multiple use leader"
7. Local newspaper environmental reporter.

A total of 41 Interviews were Conducted

Data Analysis and Synthesis:

All of the interviews included in this study have been analyzed using elements from Grounded Theory methodology (Lester & Hadden, 1980, Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The purpose of this analysis is to allow the inductive development of theory, thereby assuring that theory is derived from the data rather than the data being interpreted fit the theory. This may be accomplished in two ways, both of which have been utilized by the researchers. The first method involves scanning the data to develop a sense of the major patterns of behaviors and attitudes therein. "Key" words emerged during the interviews which best depicted the behaviors and attitudes being expressed. Here is the original list of key words:

Key Words/ Short Phrases:

Perseverance, Mutual Learning, Education, Trust, Distrust, Honesty, Dishonesty, Common Sense, Lack of Common Sense, Communication, Communication skill, Training, Understanding, Dignity, Respect, Clarification, Accuracy, Governmental Incompetence, Sharing ideas, Broadening Perspectives, Flexibility, Tolerance, Worthiness, Motivation, Alienation, Sharing Feelings, Commitment (to the task, to each other, to the resource), Follow-Thru, Lack of Follow-Thru, Process, Operational Rules, On-the-ground, Common Ground, Common Values, Feelings, Emotions, Real Meaningful Information, Personalities, Individual Importance, Agency Turnover, Circle, Frustration, Connection, Time, Wariness, Suspicious, Watchful, Cynical Cynicism, Relationships, Involvement, Good

Will, Resentment, Action, Inaction, Personal learning, Uncertainty, Knowledge, Affirmation, Contribution, Black Hole/Ozone, Pressure, Sideboards, Structure, Solutions, Organization, Sense-of-place, Facilitation, Listening, Grounding, Decision Maker, Consensus, Hierarchy, Humor, Diversity, Professional Arrogance, Tunnel Vision.

These words, and the various dimensions of each, were then categorized to provide a preliminary framework for developing a perspective of the interactive processes occurring in the data. The original headings were: Process and Structure, Feelings and Relationships, Education and Learning and Commitments (Strauss, 19??)

The original listing and categorization was developed by Dave Powell, Jon Bumstead and Dr. Kooros Mahmoudi through independent analysis of the interviews by each of the researchers. They then collaboratively discussed and synthesized into the four original categories. The original independently formulated set of key words and first attempts at categorization were about 801k identical amongst these researchers.

After this task was completed Natalie Harlan, MA, a political scientist, independently employed the second Grounded Theory methodology called "substantive coding. In this work data are examined, with line-by-line notations on the emergence of concepts. In essence, substantive coding provides more detailed information about the data and may verify, elaborate upon or counteract the initial findings. It results in the shift from a substantive level to a theoretical one. In this study, coding of the material served to verify and elaborate upon the findings derived from scanning the data. The category headings were found to be accurate but one heading was added. This fifth category was originally going to be discussed within the "Commitment" heading. After discussion amongst the researchers it was decided to add a fifth category titled "Outcomes". The continual express of dissatisfaction and continual focus on processes that resulted (thus far) in mostly intangible and not pragmatic conclusions warranted an independent discussion.

B. Theoretical Discussion of Findings:

Presenting research findings in the language of social theory is important (Gordon, 1988). This perspective allows more abstract discussion of the data and creates a format whereby the conclusions may be used in future comparative studies (Douglas, 1976). This analysis will not necessarily expose any previously unidentified components, but rather will express what has been learned in the language of social theory and perhaps provide insights on where to go from here (Cashion & Eshleman, 1985).

Justification for Theory Development:

The next logical step in grounded theory methodology is to attempt the construction of sociological theory based on the findings in the data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) but first, one may ponder questions such as; *"Why is this important"* or *"What practical use will be made of any theory developed?"* Just as the interviewees expressed concern over implementing the results of their efforts, researchers should be equally interested in producing information which will, in some way, be applicable to the field. Thus, justification for the development of theory lies in its applicability to the research site. Glaser and Strauss provide a framework for analyzing the applicability of theory, by outlining four interrelated properties:

- 1) The theory must fit the substantive area in which it will be used,
- 2) It must be readily understandable by laymen concerned with this area,
- 3) It must be sufficiently general to be applicable to a multitude of diverse daily situations within the substantive area, and
- 4) It must allow the user partial control over the structure and process of daily situations as they change through time.

The generation of theory allows interested parties to learn something from the research without having to become familiar with every aspect of the study (Isaak, 1985). It provides, in a sense, a formal response to those who might inquire: "What did you learn?" or "What does it mean?" it is therefore necessary

that theory be the result of rigorous research reflecting the integrity of the project Johnson & Joslyn, 1986).

Development of Theory

There are two basic types of theory associated with the qualitative analysis methodology (grounded theory) developed by Glaser and Strauss: substantive and formal (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Substantive theory is developed for a specific area of sociological inquiry, in this case public participation utilizing work groups to help guide natural resource management decisions.

Formal theory applies to many substantive cases within a given area. Therefore conclusions about public participation in natural resource management *combined* with other specifically characterized studies on topics such as consensus, public involvement in resolving disputes, group interaction patterns and interest representation may result in a formal theory perhaps dealing with conflict resolution. Although some useful insights may emerge concerning formal theory, the focus here is on generating theory at a substantive level.

Several categories emerged from the data as critical factors in the process of including the public in an attempt to end the gridlock that engulfs natural resource management on public lands today. These categories, presented in the Participants Perspective section of the paper, are: Feelings and Relationships, Process and Structure, Education and Learning, Commitment and Outcomes.

The need for effective communication, though not presented as a categorical heading, is another concept which was embedded in the interviews as being an extremely important skill in the effort to resolve natural resource management challenges. Combining this element with the categorical headings allows the generation of theory and the development of related hypotheses.

The theory we are interested in developing should address factors that contribute to the success of *goal-oriented group interaction*.

Based on the data, we can formulate several hypotheses relating to public/agency goal oriented action groups. Here are the proposed hypotheses:

- 1) Public participation is more effective when:
 - a) there is a feeling of openness among the group members, and
 - b) enough time has been given for relationships to be established.
- 2) Group members are more likely to willingly put effort into achieving their goals if they:
 - a) believe the time spent in the process is worth the effort, and
 - b) they have a clear understanding of the structure and objectives of the project.
- 3) Public participation is more likely to result in the achievement of goals if:
 - a) group members are educated in the process of effective group interaction, and
 - b) members are willing to learn about varying interests from one another.
- 4) Public participation effectiveness increases when:
 - a) members are consistently committed to the group,
 - b) hierarchical support is dependable, and
 - c) efforts of the group result in definable outcomes.

These hypotheses outline the theory of public participation analysis generated from the data collected from the various working groups in this research project. The next step is to

determine the usefulness of this information. You may have noticed that the theory encompasses each of the categorical headings raised by the participants and addresses the hierarchical question posed by management and responded to by the participants.

Theory Application

Now that we have generated a theory of how to work effectively in public/ agency work groups, we can determine its utility to the participants of this study. Glaser and Strauss developed a model for testing the validity of theory through examining categories of: (Glaser Strauss, 1967)

- Fitness
- Understandability
- Generality
- Control

Fitness: Ensuring that a theory fits its substantive area is one of the basic tenets of grounded theory methodology. One of the problems with deductive theories is that researchers may be compelled to alter or adjust the data so they will prove correct the chosen theory for describing the situation at hand. With grounded theory, no presumptions are made about the research site until the data had been coded and analyzed. This prevents the researcher from interjecting personal values and beliefs into the analysis. In this case, the method of data collection (personal interviews) assists in assuring that the theory fits the specific data (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973).

Understandability: Again, because the hypotheses have directly emerged from statements made by the subjects, it would appear safe to assume the participants and others would be able to understand the significance and validity of these hypotheses (Glaser Strauss, 1967).

Generality: The generality of the theory and its components must make it applicable to a variety of situations within the daily operations of the research site (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) - The proposed hypotheses deal with many aspects of group dynamics.

Techniques contributing to effect group dynamics have been studied and documented across a wide array of situations. The suggestions and topics raised by these participants essentially verify existing group dynamic studies. Therefore, the proposed theories are well grounded and have demonstrated their generalizability through practice by these groups.

Control: Finally, the issue of control implies that the subjects are able to have enough control in everyday situations to make the application of the theory worth trying (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). There are two facets to this issue worthy of discussion. First, most of the hypotheses deal with types of interaction which are easily within the control of the participants to manipulate. They are directly involved in aspects of their feelings and relationships as they develop trust and respect for their fellow group members. They can actively initiate and adhere to processes and structure through the establishment of clearly defined goals and objectives. They can create an environment conducive to education and learning as they open channels of communication and attempt to understand the positions of others. Finally, each person can adopt a high level of commitment to the process and by their own actions impart control through consistent participation and follow-thru.

Parts of the fourth hypothesis were formulated from a negative result of the study. The researchers detected frustration on the part of the interviewees as it related to the perceived and/or real lack of governmental hierarchial support. Agency turnover, commitments not honored and agency "black holes" all contributed to a perceived and sometimes real lack of agency hierarchial support. It is in these areas that more control and assurance concerning outcomes must be available to the group members (the public and local agency employees) if the theory and it's related hypotheses are to be of use.

Final Theoretical Remarks

As mentioned earlier, the purpose of this analysis has been to explain in theoretical terms the finding of the study. This will presumably be useful in future attempts to resolve gridlock situations in wilderness management through the utilization of public participation in working (or consensus) groups. It also lays the foundation for the potential formulation of formal theory

in the area of conflict resolution (Gordon, 1988). More detailed information on grounded theory methodology and sociological theory in general may be found in the attached bibliography. But the conclusion here is that the level of methodology utilized in this study has proven sufficient for generating some insights on effective public participation in the area of wilderness management.

APPENDIX B.

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